

MCCAIN to Iraq and Afghanistan. I witnessed her world knowledge and authoritative approach to foreign policy. I have seen her tireless work ethic and intelligence up close, as well as her ability to engage with colleagues across the aisle to get the job done and to meet the needs of the American people.

I will always remember one meeting in particular that we had together in Afghanistan. Senator CLINTON and I broke off from the group to go meet with a group of Afghan women from all walks of life. I was so impressed with Senator CLINTON's engagement with these women, with her genuine interest and the details of their lives, whether it was their access to health care or the education for their children. She was very engaged in the conversations despite the fact that we had traveled all night and were extremely tired.

Her caring, her compassion came across in her conversations with these women. I know these qualities—her caring, her compassion, her commitment, her extraordinary preparation and intelligence—will serve her well and will serve our country well as Secretary of State.

Today our Nation faces many pressing challenges abroad. The challenges are many, not only in Afghanistan and Iraq but security in the Middle East and the safety of the people of Israel, and the dangerous situation in Pakistan. I am encouraged by Senator CLINTON's commitment to a foreign policy and a national security strategy that is built on bipartisan consensus and executed with nonpartisan commitment and confidence. She has promised a foreign policy based on principles and pragmatism, not rigid ideology; facts and evidence, not emotion or prejudice.

I urge my colleagues to join me in voting in favor of her confirmation, and I echo the suggestion of Senator MCCAIN that we get on with this as she is an extraordinary nominee and deserves our support.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The Senator from Massachusetts.

Mr. KERRY. Mr. President, I thank the Senator from Arizona and the Senator from Maine for their important comments, with which I agree. I understand the Senate is under a prior order to actually recess.

I ask unanimous consent that we allow one more speaker, the Senator from South Carolina, at which time the Senate would recess for the caucus lunches and return, I believe, at 2:15.

Mr. MCCAIN. Mr. President, would the Senator yield for a question?

Mr. KERRY. I would be happy to yield for a question.

Mr. MCCAIN. Do you think it is possible, if we can get it cleared, to perhaps have this unanimous consent vote before breaking for lunch?

Mr. KERRY. I think it is possible if the Senator can persuade three members of his caucus that they do not need to speak on this issue. If that can happen in the next 5 minutes, I believe it is possible for us to move forward.

I think the Senator's cloakroom has those names and, obviously, to protect their right to be able to speak, we need to check with them. But that is the only thing standing between our ability to confirm the nomination before the recess.

Mr. MCCAIN. I will follow up with another question for my colleague; that is, if we are unable to do it in the next few minutes, perhaps we could, for sure, during the lunch break, be ready to go at the conclusion of the lunch break.

Mr. KERRY. I think that would be terrific. Again, if all three Senators would raise this issue at the caucus, at their caucus luncheon, we ought to be able to come back and expedite the confirmation. We are prepared to vote now. We were prepared to vote yesterday. I might add, Senator LUGAR was encouraging our moving by unanimous consent yesterday. So we are a day overdue, and we are ready to proceed.

With that, I would yield such time as the Senator from South Carolina might consume.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Without objection, the request is agreed to.

The Senator from South Carolina is recognized.

Mr. GRAHAM. Mr. President, I thank the committee chairman. I want to recognize the work the committee did. I thought the hearings were very important for the country. They were well done. They were timely held. Any concerns about conflicts of interest, there will be a process in the future, if that happens to be a concern, to go through the committee. I have a lot of confidence in the committee to provide oversight.

But having said that, I have a lot of confidence in Senator CLINTON to be a good Secretary of State. We have a new President. We had a tough campaign. The campaign is over, but the wars are not. The challenges facing the country are enormous, domestically and internationally.

I think this new President deserves to have his team in place. I could not think of a better choice for Secretary of State, and he has many to choose from. So he has made his choice; the committee has acted. I do hope the Senate can act expeditiously after lunch. Everyone deserves to have their say. I respect the chairman preserving the ability of Senators to have their say.

I intend to vote for Senator CLINTON. I have had the pleasure of serving with her, traveling throughout the world. I know she understands the world; people understand her. There is no place in the world that she cannot go that people do not have, I think, a very favorable impression of her. She will help execute a foreign policy that is going to be difficult. I want it to be bipartisan where it can.

If we can get this done today, it will be good for the country. She will do an outstanding job. I have a lot of con-

fidence in the committee to make sure that any potential conflict of interests are fairly dealt with.

With that, I hope this afternoon we can do it by voice vote. But let's get it done. This country needs a Secretary of State right now, this minute, engaging the world because we have young men and women throughout the world in harm's way, and they need an advocate on the world stage.

There is no better advocate I can think of than Senator HILLARY CLINTON. She can do an outstanding job. I appreciate the chairman allowing me to speak on her behalf, and I enthusiastically will support her.

COMMUNICATION FROM SENATOR KEN SALAZAR

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The Chair lays before the Senate the following communication, which the clerk will report.

The assistant legislative clerk read as follows:

U.S. SENATE,

Washington, DC, January 20, 2009.

Hon. JOE BIDEN,

Vice President of the United States, President of the Senate, U.S. Capitol, Washington, DC.

DEAR VICE PRESIDENT BIDEN: I hereby resign as United States Senator for the State of Colorado immediately, in order to undertake the responsibilities of United States Secretary of the Interior. Enclosed is a letter to the Governor of Colorado concerning the same.

Sincerely,

KEN SALAZAR,
U.S. Senator.

RECESS

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Under the previous order, the Senate stands in recess until 2:15 p.m.

Thereupon, the Senate, at 12:52 p.m., recessed until 2:15 p.m. and reassembled when called to order by the Presiding Officer (Mr. CARDIN.)

EXECUTIVE SESSION

NOMINATION OF HILLARY RODHAM CLINTON TO BE SEC- RETARY OF STATE—Continued

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Massachusetts.

Mr. KERRY. May I ask how much time remains with respect to the Clinton nomination?

The PRESIDING OFFICER. There is 57 minutes on the majority and 76 minutes on the Republican side.

Mr. KERRY. It is my understanding the Senator from South Carolina wishes to speak.

We have had some discussion with a few of our colleagues on the other side of the aisle. I understand there are two or three folks who want to speak, at which point I am prepared to move forward immediately to a vote on this nomination. That is our current plan, unless somebody else had a reason they wanted to speak.